

St. Peter, MN — Today, Congressman Walz, along with business leaders, labor leaders, and local officials urged the Obama Administration and the U.S. Senate to move forward with crafting a new Surface Transportation Bill to ensure public safety, create jobs, and stimulate economic growth.

“Hard-working families and businesses across southern Minnesota know that rebuilding our crumbling public infrastructure and creating a modern, safer transportation system is important for long-term economic growth,” said Walz. “The President and Congress should move forward now with crafting a new transportation bill not just continue the status quo, business-as-usual approach.”

“Postponing the implementation of the next federal highway bill could delay infrastructure improvements necessary for Minnesota businesses' to remain competitive. The bill contains provisions to move both people and freight more efficiently - both components of business success,” said Jeremy Estumson, Government Affairs Director for the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce. “We are particularly excited about Congressman Walz's commitment to efficiency and innovation in this bill. Whether cutting administrative costs or delivering projects more cost effectively, USDOT must focus on doing more with less like all businesses in this economy.”

“We are grateful that Congressman Walz chose to stop here in Saint Peter and talk about transportation and its tremendous impact on our local economies,” said Todd Prafke, City Administrator of St. Peter. “We see that even more acutely here because of the impact that ARRA dollars have had on us in Saint Peter. Transportation dollars need to do more than just be allocated. We need to do more than just ‘something’. We need to do the “right thing” with an understanding that those dollars do more than connect communities; they connect people and businesses.”

Walz also noted that this legislation would give southern Minnesota a chance to complete important local projects.

“I strongly believe that it is my duty to fight for funding for high-quality, local projects like expanding Highway 14 to make it safer, extending 55th Street in Rochester to ease traffic flow and encourage development and upgrade Highway 60 to improve mobility in southwestern Minnesota,” said Walz. “Our local and state governments need stable, reliable sources of funding to plan for the future. This bill is our opportunity to move these local projects forward, expanding economic opportunity for local business, putting Minnesotans back to work and improving safety for those who use the roads.”

Speakers at today's event included:

Congressman Walz

Todd Prafke, City Administrator, City of St. Peter

Jeremy Estumson, Government Affairs Director, Minnesota Chamber of Commerce

Lee Hiller, Local 49, International Union of Operating Engineers

Representative Terry Morrow
Jim Swanson, MnDOT District 7

In June, U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood asked Members of Congress to postpone the overhaul of our nation's transportation policies and systems and solely extend the current law for eighteen months. Walz and Transportation & Infrastructure Chairman Jim Oberstar rejected the Administration's 18-month extension of current transportation law because it will leave states without certainty and reliable funding source that they need to plan, design and construct significant multi-year highway and transit projects. This slowdown will offset much of the benefit of the increases transportation investment provided under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

At that time, Walz, along with his colleagues on the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee sent a letter to President Obama in June urging him to support a reauthorization bill this year.